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VA proposes updates to rating schedule for respiratory, auditory and mental disorders

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs is proposing changes to the [VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities](#) specifically pertaining to the respiratory, auditory and mental disorders body systems.

The proposed updates to the rating schedule for these conditions will enable VA to incorporate modern medical data and terminology to provide Veterans with more accurate and consistent decisions.

“Veterans who currently receive compensation for a service-connected condition in these body systems will not have their disability rating impacted when the VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities is updated,” said Thomas Murphy, Northeast district director, performing the delegable duties of the undersecretary for benefits. “Updating the rating schedule allows Veterans to receive decisions based on the most current medical knowledge relating to their condition.”

By incorporating modern medical data in the assessment of disabilities and how they impact earning capacity, Veterans will receive evaluations which more accurately compensate them for their service-connected disabilities. Proposed updates include:

- Modernizing the evaluative rating criteria for sleep apnea, using developments in medical knowledge to evaluate it based on its responsiveness to treatment, bringing the rating criteria for sleep apnea more closely in line with the stated purpose of the rating schedule.
- Evaluating tinnitus (ringing in the ears) as a symptom of the underlying disease which causes it, rather than as a stand-alone disability.
- Evaluating mental health conditions based on a more robust and holistic approach that assesses how impactful the disability is to cognition, interpersonal relationships, task completion, life activities and self-care. Additionally, the proposed evaluation criteria include a 10% minimum evaluation for having one or more service-connected mental health conditions and will no longer require “total occupational and social impairment” to attain a 100% evaluation.

No change to a Veteran’s current rating would occur due to these proposed changes. If the proposed changes are finalized, Veterans who currently receive compensation for a service-connected condition can apply for increased compensation, but no reductions shall be made unless an improvement in the Veteran’s disability is shown to have occurred.

The public has 60 days to provide comments to VA regarding the two proposed updates via the Federal Register notices located [here](#) and [here](#).

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